of the mandatory testing regime of the Spices Board for chilli powder/ chilli products.

Government has expressed its concern to the EU authorities over the manner and the procedure governing the issuance of rapid alerts.

(c) The Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Agreement of WTO provides for notification of sanitary standards prior to their enforcement in order to provide trading partners an opportunity to comment thereon and these comments have to be taken into account before finalizing and enforcing the standards/measures.

(d) Sanitary and phytosanitary standards are not to be used as non-tariff barriers. Under the SPS agreement, WTO member countries are permitted to impose only those requirements/measures, which are based on scientific principles and are needed to protect public health. The Government can challenge another country's food safety or plant health requirements can challenge another country's food safety or plant health requirements on the ground that they are not justified by scientific evidence. The transparency in the SPS measures discourages countries to use them as non-tariff barriers.

Shortage of Coal in Thermal Power Stations

*59. SHRI AMAR SINGH:
SHRI ABU ASIM AZMI:

Will the Minister of POWER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a large number of thermal power stations in the country have been facing an acute shortage of coal and a number of them are facing immediate closure;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the remedial steps Government propose to take in that direction?

THE MINISTER OF POWER (SHRI P.M. SAYEED): (a) and (b) A number of thermal power stations in the country are facing problem of inadequate supply of coal. As on 20th July, 2005, 14 thermal power stations were

'critical' *i.e.* having coal stock of less than 7 days and out of these 14 stations, 5 were 'super critical' *i.e.* having coal stock of less than 4 days. The total generation loss has been 1512 Million Units during the first quarter of 2005-06 (April-June-2005) due to shortage of coal. There has been, however, no closure of any power station due to shortage of coal.

(c) The following steps have been taken by the Government to overcome the shortage of coal:

(A) Short-term action:

(i) *Monitoring:*

- Review by Union Minister of Power with MOS (Coal);
- Periodic review by Committee of Secretaries;
- A Group of Officers headed by Secretary (Coordination) in the Cabinet Secretariat reviews the infrastructure constraints including supply of coal to thermal power plants in the country on a monthly basis;
- A Sub-Group constituted under the above Infrastructure Constraints Review Committee and headed by Joint Secretary, Ministry of Coal reviews supply of coal to critical power stations having stock of less than 7 days on weekly basis;
- Daily monitoring is done by Ministry of Power on the basis of Management Information System (MIS) of Central Electricity Authority, and interactions among Secretary (Coal), Secretary (Power) and Chairman, Railway Board; and
- Coal companies have been asked to step up production.

(ii) *Import of Coal by select Power Generation Utilities through a centrally chalked out action plan.*

(B) Medium term action:

(i) Opening of new coal blocks by Public Sector Coal companies.

(ii) Allocation of captive coal blocks to the power utilities.